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THE SITE OF CONSTANTINOPLE A FACTOR OF HISTORICAL VALUE

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For more than 2000 years the leading minds of the world have dreamt of Constantinople. Dreamt of it in visions of splendor as did the Russians of Kief and Smolensk in mid-medieval days when they thought of Tsarigrad—the city of Emperors. Dreamt of it in golden dreams as did the bankers of Venice and Genoa in the twelfth century when they figured that the annual income of Byzantine Emperors exceeded one hundred million dollars. Dreamt of it as did the minstrels of western Europe when they sang of the beauty of Byzantine palaces and the pleasures of life in Byzantium. To account for the magic of the name and for the strength and permanence of the impression it created requires a thorough understanding of the value of its site, and I am attempting to show in the following lines that a large share of Constantinople's greatness and fame was the result of its geographical position. This paper will therefore be confined to a presentation of what might correctly be called a background study.

Were we to liken the world of ancient history to a gigantic spider's web, Constantinople would occupy the center, and the threads radiating outward would represent the far-reaching system of roads leading in every direction from the capital. How different is the relation of Rome and Constantinople to systems of world routes! We are so accustomed to the saying that all roads led to Rome that we forget the truth which was that all roads were made to lead artificially to Rome for a stated period of history, whereas they have always led naturally to Constantinople. Rome was the convenient center for a Mediterranean power. Constantinople on the other hand was the indicated headquarters of authority in the western half of the eastern hemisphere.

It was the hub of a set of land and sea roads which, spoke-like, linked it to the outermost fringe of the inhabited world. The Baltic was reached on the north through the long rivers

flowing on the great plains of Russia. Out of Thrace and its cold mountains the valleys of the Maritsa and Isker led into the Danube furrow which provided a connecting link with the Atlantic on the west. In the east the roads extended as far as the Pacific while to the south they attained the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.

The eastern land routes crossed Asia Minor on the north and south. The southern road made use of the winding valley of the Sakaria river to climb upon the tableland. The descent was made at the celebrated Cilician gate, whence a fan of roads led to Egypt and India. This last goal could be reached by land south of the great central salt deserts of Persia, by following the old Median way between Baghdad and Kermanshah and proceeding by Kirman to northwestern India. The northern road usually comprised a watery stretch between Constantinople and Trebizond. East of this city it passed by Tabriz and Teheran and penetrated Turan, Central Asia, and China or else lost itself by way of Meshed into the mountain tangle of Afghanistan.

To the east Constantinople has always been in touch with the heart of Slavic Russia through the Dnieper valley. The river and its affluents drain an extensive plain which connects the central plateau of Russia with the Podolian upland. Baltic ridges form its natural bulwark on the north. But the easiest outlet leads southwards toward the Black Sea. Hence Varangian adventurers leading flotillas of war galleys drifted inevitably towards the capital. In time these fair-complexioned northerners were drafted by Byzantine emperors into regiments whose boast of being Constantinople's stoutest defenders has never been controverted.

The importance of the penetration of this long river into Russian territory can never be overestimated in the history of civilization. Its head-waters attain the eastern edge of Russia's industrial zone. Its lower course waters the western end of the celebrated Black Soil or Chernozom belt. These facts mean that the river valley is the main artery of communication in Russia's most densely populated sections. There the purest type of Russians known as Little Russians are found. These Slavs are probably the only members of the Russian family whose blood is free from Teutonic or Tatar mingling. Nor is

it strange to find that this very region is gradually receiving recognition as the original seat of the entire Slav family.

Into this very heart of Slavdom and of Russian nationality, the winding channel of the Dnieper provided the convenient road along which the Christian ideals of Byzantium traveled northward. Russia, barred on land by interminable plains and lofty mountains from receiving the Vatican's form of Christianity, lay nevertheless open to the influence of the Eastern Church, thanks to the Dnieper furrow. This conversion of pagan Russia to Christianity by Byzantine monks is an event of the utmost historical significance in the history of European progress. It enabled Russia to play the part of warden of Europe's eastern marches. Between the rushing tide of Tatar barbarism and the immature civilization of Western Europe, Russia proved the bulwark that stemmed the flood. But this historical fact was a direct outcome of the ease with which Byzantines could travel to Russian cities by sailing on the Black Sea and up Russian rivers.

To understand better how Constantinople found itself on the great highroads which men have used in preference to others throughout the ages, it is necessary to bear in mind the Eurasian migrations. Probably the most important prehistoric migration between Europe and Asia was the advance of the Alpines, men of the race of roundheads, who traveled westward from Asia bringing the knowledge of metals to the Europeans of the Stone Age. It was the introduction of a superior civilization from Asia, and Constantinople lay directly in the path of this advance. In the north where the great steppes of Asia pass into the lowlands of Russia and Germany, humanity was less civilized than in the rugged regions of mountains rising to the south. The intercourse between these northerners did not affect Constantinople directly. The main body of the bronze-bearing Alpines crossed from Asia Minor into the Balkan peninsula. They must have forded the Bosphorus. The plains of Thrace and of northwestern Anatolia will yield the secrets of these migrations around the shores of the Golden Horn as soon as exploration will become possible.

In the early times before 3000 B. C. travel was slow and confined largely to the mainland. But the admirable site of Constantinople must have attracted the attention of the bronze-

bearing wanderers who were trickling into Europe. With the growth of maritime travel following human ability to build boats after man had accustomed himself to use metal tools, the water lanes became frequented, and the water route connecting the Pontic shores with the Hellenic seats of civilization was widely traveled. Constantinople's greatness was assured as soon as this route was established. No wonder, then, that the records to which we can turn ascribe the founding of Byzantium to the Megarans in 657 B. C. The date is significant because we know that colonization was carried on by the Greeks at that time. The 7th century was one in which trade between the Greek cities and the harbors of the Black Sea basin was in a flourishing condition. Through this commerce the products of inner Asia were beginning to be known in Europe. Nevertheless we cannot accept this date as that of the founding of Byzantium. The discovery of tumuli and mounds containing stone implements in the suburbs of Constantinople, at Erenkeuy and Maltepe, as well as beyond in the Thracian rearlands and on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus bears evidence of the occupation of the site before the coming of the Megarans.

The main advantage of Constantinople's site is derived from its position at the junction of two highways which connect Europe and Asia. As long as trade intercourse between the steppes of southwestern Russia and the Mediterranean basin was maintained and as long as Asia communicated with Europe through Asia Minor and the Balkan Peninsula, a share of the profits accruing from that trade would naturally revert to Constantinople. From the 5th century B. C. to the beginning of the 15th century A. D.—a period of 2000 years—an extensive interchange of commodities was carried on between the harbors of the Black Sea and the cities of the Greek peninsula. The Pontic shore was a granary to which hardy Greek sailors repaired year after year, for the supplies of wheat needed by their countrymen. Besides wheat, the steppes of southern Russia provided hides, skins, wool, and lumber. All these cargoes passed through the Bosphorus, stopping at the far-famed city which to the sailor and the trader was both a resting-station and an outfitting-base.

At the height of Rome's power a temporary change in the direction of travel occurred, and a part of the Asiatic traffic

was diverted to Ephesus, whence it was loaded on vessels sailing for Rome. Constantine's choice of a capital in 330, however, re-established the natural order. Ramsay notes that by the time of Justinian the southern route of Asia Minor was abandoned in favor of the northern.¹ Students of modern economic conditions in the Near East will not be surprised by these changes of traffic lanes, for to-day Smyrna is Constantinople's rival as a port of shipment for Southern Europe.

From 400 A. D. to 1000 A. D. Constantinople was the chief trading-center of the world. The Byzantine flag was not unknown in English ports where the galleys of Constantinople were often to be seen. And in the 6th century every important commercial center of the eastern Mediterranean lands had been superseded by Constantinople. The trade routes of antiquity had been extended deviously so as to cross the Bosphorus. Constantinople had become the city in which commercial privileges and trade monopolies flourished to an extent unknown elsewhere. The commerce of the world was made to leave a share of its profits to the small band of merchant-princes who controlled its routing.

The Byzantine's trade with Slavs was not merely confined to purchases of raw material from Russia. The luxury which prevailed at all Slavic courts during medieval times forced courtiers to spend lavishly on their dress. One could appear at court only arrayed in one's best. Ornaments especially were essential. An ordinary fur coat would not satisfy the upper social circles. It needs must have all the trimmings of pomp imaginable, such as gold braid and surcharges of value. High-priced ornaments were also in demand for the decoration of Slavic palaces. To supply all these wants was Byzantium's specialty. The Slav purchaser in need of silk cloth or velvet did not need to travel beyond Constantinople. The city's markets contained ample stocks at his disposal. Its goldsmiths and silversmiths were famed for their skill in converting precious metals into jewelry. This was the trade which excited the jealousy and envy of Italian cities, for it was only by the advantage of position that Byzantium was reached before the Italian cities whose favored rival it had become.

¹ *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 74.

It is therefore natural to find Italian merchants congregating in flourishing colonies in Constantinople. The merchant-managers of the Italian city-states, notably at Venice, Genoa, Amalfi, and Pisa, realized that the economic control of the Byzantine Empire at which they aimed could be secured only by establishing themselves solidly in the Byzantine city.

Constantinople was a city of active trade long before it became a capital. Its prosperity depended on the convergence of land and water traffic toward the Golden Horn. Its situation made it both a European and an Asiatic city, and events which brought disasters to other parts of Europe only served to strengthen the importance of the capital. Thus when Western Europe was cast into intellectual gloom by the invasion of northern barbarians, Constantinople remained the seat of the highest civilization of its time. Later when the Mediterranean was infested by pirates—Norsemen or Africans—trade was diverted to land routes which met at Constantinople. Even the loss of Syria and Egypt by the Roman Empire raised the fame of Constantinople as a commercial center, for the trade between Europe and the East which had passed into the famous centers of these two provinces now flowed naturally towards Constantinople.

The transfer of the Roman capital to the shores of the Bosphorus by Constantine was significant. It implied that Asia was acquiring greater importance than Africa in the Roman world. The ties that bound the two continents to the great European Empire were economic. By the 4th century Africa had been drained of its resources. Commerce and the technical knowledge of the day were unable to continue dealing at a profit with the Black Continent. New fields of exploitation were sought, and Asia began to occupy the chief place in the minds of Roman leaders.

Prior to the occupation of Constantinople as imperial residence the Roman Empire had been a political entity which symbolized the unity of the Mediterranean region. Rome, admirably situated at equal distance from the eastern and western ends of the inland sea, had become mistress of the world by virtue of the advantage of geographical position. The wealth of Africa was the foundation on which the power of the Roman capital rested. The foundation was undermined by the activi-

ties of the empire's fiscal agents, men who acted merely as the agents of masters in Rome. Constantine realized the tottering condition which the mainstay of the empire had attained. His determination to keep closer watch on the revenues from Asia was practically forced upon him by existing conditions.

The value of Constantinople's site asserted itself soon after the foundation of the new city of Constantinople. This event had a disastrous effect on Alexandria and Rome. The difference of language saved the Latin city, but Alexandria, which hitherto had occupied the first place in the Greek intellectual and religious world, lost its rank as soon as the supremacy of the Byzantine capital was established. The Bishop of Alexandria, who was the recognized head of the Greek Church, saw his prestige and authority transferred to the Patriarch of Constantinople. With the decline of Greek life in Alexandria, the city was abandoned by the scholars and students who had been accustomed to gather in its learned institutions. Their studies were resumed in new reunions along the banks of the Golden Horn. Likewise all the Hellenistic tendencies and ideals of Asia Minor were abandoned in their famous centers—Antioch and Ephesus—only to be replaced by the revival of thought and active life which by the 5th century marked Byzantine life.

A history of Constantinople is therefore fundamentally the account of the results of a convergence of roads. The wealth of continents poured into the city placed at the junction of world highways. Constantinople became a community of merchant princes and of captains of industry of various nationalities. This is the spectacle afforded by an intimate insight into its society during Byzantine times. For a time the city's triple wall swept around the world's best-supplied warehouses. The harvests and products of great plains north of the Black Sea, consisting chiefly of wheat and other cereals, were collected and stored in Constantinople. Thither also were sent Asia Minor's varied products. From Spain and Italy, from Germany and Russia, from India and Cathay, merchandise commanding high prices reached Constantinople partly for consumption, but mainly for redistribution. The northern lanes of traffic drew the furs, the slaves, the honey, and the wax of Scandinavia and Russia. With the currents of the Black Sea flowed a steady stream of spices, dyes, and gems found in remote corners of

Asia. Caffa, Tana, and Trebizond were the Black Sea harbors where caravan goods were transshipped to Constantinople. Arabs, Armenians, and Persians acted as gathering middlemen for the merchants of Byzantium, while the Slavs and Teutons of the wide Danube lane played the part of the distributing agents.

Gradually after Constantine's time, the silks, gums, and dye-stuffs of India were supplied to all of Northern Europe, as well as to a great part of the western districts of that continent by Byzantine merchants. The history of adventurous Byzantine navigators remains to be told. We know at any rate that by the 11th century, the Byzantine merchant navy occupied the first rank in numbers. The fact is that Byzantine emperors had always shown great interest in the Empire's navy. This explains why Scandinavian, Teuton, or Anglo-Saxon adventurers could always rely on finding employment as sailors in Byzantium.

Society in Byzantine Constantinople reflected the peculiar geographical situation which affected the destiny of the city. The ease with which commerce and industry could be undertaken at this center accounts for the creation of a wealthy and powerful Byzantine 'bourgeoisie.' This element was the mainstay of the Byzantine treasury. It was possible to tax its revenues and Byzantine government officials never neglected this opportunity of increasing state receipts. Finlay reminds us that taxation yields little where nobles and serfs constitute the only strata in the population.² In such a state opposition above and poverty below will thwart the revenue-collector's efforts. A trading community, however, is the very foundation of power. Much of the civil and military superiority of the Byzantine Empire as well as its prestige depended on the tireless activity of the merchant class in Byzantium.

Of the great fortunes accumulated in the days of active trading not a vestige has survived. Constantinople, buffeted by the strongest gales of history because of its site, is unlike other capitals situated more fortunately away from the highway of world casualty. In these many wealthy residents trace the origin of their riches to medieval times. We must therefore seek a more tangible manifestation of the influence of this site.

² *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 717-867, p. 422.

This we find in the art which graces the city's monuments. To follow the evolution of Byzantine architecture is to trace the growth of a style which has culled from East and West alike and which, while finally reaching the distinctive stage which we call Byzantine, nevertheless resumes in itself a blend of splendid conceptions originating in Asia and Europe.

The single example of St. Sophia, where radiant glory and pious fervor are joined, will illustrate my thought. The basilica of Greek-Roman origin here underlies the cupola transplanted from Asia. Not only does the union of the two produce a characteristic Byzantine style, but each of these features have undergone modifications suggested by the creative genius of Byzantine architects. Thus the straight line of Roman basilicas is changed into a polygonal or curved outline, while the dome is eventually made to rest on the famous pendentive of Byzantine architecture. Through this combination the pomp of Asia and the piety of Europe's Christianity were first brought together upon a site eminently indicated by nature for this union. It was no accident, but the unfolding of natural progress. In St. Sophia there is more than a concrete edifice of stone and marble. The noble sanctuary is the symbol of an idea suggested by the site over which it rises. By its dominating position Constantinople had become the capital of Eastern Christianity. Its mission was to replace pagan by Christian ideals in Eastern lands. With this end in view it was customary to exact attendance of princes and ambassadors at the divine celebrations held in the cathedrals of the Byzantine capital. All the beauty that fancy could create was requisitioned in order to impress foreigners with the greatness of a religion whose recognized head was the Byzantine Emperor. In this sense St. Sophia as well as the marvelous beauty of its interior decoration are products of the site we are investigating.

One effect of the convergence of natural routes at Constantinople is illustrated by some of the conditions which marked the trade intercourse between Russians and Byzantines. In the 10th and 11th centuries trading between Russia and Byzantium had acquired importance. But let us not forget that the transactions were almost always ratified at Constantinople. Thither came the Russians to settle particulars regarding their trading. The Greeks rarely went to Russia. In other words, owing to

its splendid position Constantinople had conferred upon its residents the inestimable advantage of being able to wait for customers in their own shops without having to resort to the fatigues of travel in search of new markets. What was true for Russian traders was equally customary with merchants of other nationalities. But without such a privileged position the great city could never have attained the position of world emporium and clearing-house which made it so conspicuous in medieval history.

To call Constantinople a European city is a misnomer. The ties that link the capital to Asia have at all times been firmer than any bond with Europe. Having emerged from the period of provincialism which narrowed the outlook and interests of its inhabitants to their immediate neighborhood, and having become mistress of the Eastern Empire, the city at once assumed the position of leadership which was the appanage of its splendid situation. It was on Asia, however, that she drew for the maintenance of her splendor and prestige. Asia Minor and the shorelands of the Black Sea abounded in natural wealth which was transferred in time to the capital city. Without Asia, Constantinople could never have played the glorious part which is hers in history. Asia's claim on her is as great as that of Europe.

The number of Asiatics at large in the city's streets suffices to betray the strength of Asia's hold over Constantinople. To-day, as in the past, there are more Asiatic residents of Constantinople than European. Garments of varied hues and patterns, everyone a memento of the past, predominate over the severe and less attractive attire of Western style. But the West is coming into its own, unfortunately for the artist perhaps, for year by year one sees more Asiatics discarding the clothes copied from models handed down by their fathers.

Perhaps the chief reason of Asia's attraction for Constantinople will be found in the fact that back in the early years of the city's existence the highest civilization flourished on the Asiatic mainland, whereas a vaguely known barbarian world occupied the territory north and east of the Balkan ranges. This Asiatic influence has been unfortunate for the mentality of Constantinople's citizens. It made the Byzantine mind partial to the ideals of Asia. And the world seen through Asiatic

eyes, be it Anatolian, Chinese, or of any intervening type, never was reality. It is fancy's creation robed in the garment of desire or hope. It brought the spirit of fatalism, that is to say of laziness, within the triple circle of walls raised by Theodosius. It has kept the matter-of-fact and logical mind of the West from obtaining the ascendancy in the city and hence throughout the length and breadth of territory which acknowledged the capital's rule.

A closer view of the site of the great city reveals the natural strength of the position. The city spreads in the shape of a triangle whose base on the west extends from the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmora. Both the northern and southern sides contain numerous small bays which were utilized as harbors in Byzantine times. The apex of this triangle, a hump of pleasant green, is known as Seraglio Point and is the oldest section of the city. It was the site on which the Akropolis of pre-Roman days was built. Here the onlooker's sweeping gaze embraces the splendid sight of the Bosphorus, Golden Horn, and Sea of Marmora seen together.

As a harbor the Golden Horn has ancient fame. A chain across its mouth along the line of the first of the modern bridges closed it at will in medieval times. By its depth and the large area it covers it affords to-day a harbor in which the navies of the world can gather together. For beauty and practical advantages the site can be compared to no other, for it is at once city and country, river and sea, valley and hill, garden and grove.

Constantinople, like Rome, had its seven hills. And the ancients who had a keen eye for majesty and dignity made good use of these eminences and crowned their summits with notable edifices. Proceeding from east to west, we observe that the easternmost hill was converted into a pedestal to support the seraglio, St. Sophia, and the mosque of Sultan Ahmed. The Hippodrome also ran lengthwise across its ridge. The valley which separates it from the next hill is the winding uphill road which runs from the outer Golden Horn shores past the Sublime Porte to St. Sophia. The mosque of Nouri-Osmanieh is built at the top of this second hill. Close by and still on the same eminence rises the porphyry column of Constantine the Great, better known as the Burnt Column.

From this second hill the height of land continues to the third through a ridge which overlooks the valley dividing them. The valley may be remembered as the one in which access is had to the Grand Bazaar. The third hill is crowned by the imposing mosque of Suleyman the Magnificent. Here also rises the ancient palace of the sultans which later became the Seraskerat, or War Office.

The aqueduct built by Valens crosses the next valley. Then comes the fourth hill with the mosque of Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror at its top. The fifth contains the mosque of Sultan Selim. The sixth hill is associated with the names of Byzantine Emperors rather than of Turkish Sultans. It was once known as the hill of the Blachernae from the name of the palace which occupied the spot. The seventh is the Xerolophos, or Dry Hill. On it are found to-day the quarters known as the Alti Mermer and Psamathia.

But if the site was open to the traffic of the world, it was also one of singularly difficult access in the last stretches of the roads which ended at its city gates. I must lay stress on this geographical combination, for it is the very foundation of the strength and influence of Constantinople. The triangular area which I have just described was partly encircled by a natural moat which proved more than once impassable to attackers. The enemy coming from Asia found that the width of this moat had often caused the failure of the city's foes. If they advanced from the landward side, a short line of formidable walls extending in a triple row from sea to sea arrested their progress. Beyond the sea and land walls nature had provided a series of advanced outposts of defence which have proved their worth to this very day. On land in Europe, the Balkans formed a mighty bulwark open here and there along defiles which could be conveniently defended. In Asia Minor, the hills of Bithynia and of the Trojan district dominated the approaches to the city. What such a site has meant for the city may be gathered from the fact that even the Turks, splendid soldiers as they were, failed to conquer the city during their westerly spread in the fourteenth century. Fully one hundred years were to elapse after their conquest of Eastern Balkan territory before they were able to become masters of the city.

By water the entrance of the Dardanelles and the Black Sea mouth of the Bosphorus—both narrow, winding, and swept by

currents—seemed ideally devised for the protection of Constantinople. The whole world has witnessed the failure of a splendidly equipped modern army to turn the Dardanelles by land. Why? Because of the line of hills rising in steps above the exceedingly narrow strip of shore which surrounded it. This narrow strip and the step-like hills explain why casualties passed the hundred thousand figure at this point in the recent Dardanelles campaign. Courage was of no avail, for the defenders merely waited with their death-dealing machines and killed their assailants by the thousand. On the Black Sea side conditions are even worse, for the rocky hills there rise precipitously out of the sea. Neither was landing attempted here.

Thus even in the gasps of Turkey's death has Constantinople's position added a short lease of life to the empire. The city, without which the entire edifice of Turkish imperialism would crumble to dust, cannot be approached by sea. A short defile, narrow and tortuous, the Bosphorus forbids access to hostile ships at one end. A longer strait, the Dardanelles, equally impassable (as events have shown), guards the other end. Currents here favor the besieged, and floating mines scattered over the flowing waters become a deadly menace to attacking invaders.

Besides its advantages as a trading-center Constantinople was therefore the ideal site from a military standpoint for an empire which was constantly engaged in border fighting. As rulers whose dominions extended over Europe and Asia the Byzantine Emperors could not find a better location from which they could march out at the head of their armies or to which they could retire with greater convenience. To-day in European general staff colleges it is customary to teach that Constantinople is the apex of two triangles whose bases lie in Europe and Asia respectively. The base of the European triangle is the line drawn from Monastir to Pirot. In Asia the base line extends between Erzerum and the Cilician Gates.

A remarkable and persistent influence of the site is presented by the cosmopolitan character of the city's population. That representatives of both continents were fated to meet and live side by side at the border zone was inevitable. And society through the ages in Constantinople has been made up of elements drawn from Europe and Asia. Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Arabs, or Slavs of different nationalities all descended from ancestors that settled within the imperial precincts in times

immemorial elbow each other to-day with no less variety than at the time of Constantine, Justinian, or Basil. The city is a meeting-place of men and ideas which have never blended to produce a uniform type because on such a site the individuality of each element was maintained by a constant flow of new arrivals. The Londoner or Parisian of our day is an Englishman or a Frenchman. A Washingtonian is an American. But in Constantinople, the scion of a very old family may be an Armenian, a Greek, a Turk, a Russian, or an Italian.

Of the influence of that site in the history of the world much may be said. The achievement of Byzantine Emperors for the cause of civilization—no mean contribution—was made possible because the site of their imperial residence afforded them protection against the destructive forces of barbarism which constantly threatened to arrest the march of progress. In the shelter of that site Constantine broke loose from the nefarious conservatism of pagan Rome and consecrated the city and empire to the cause of Christian ideals with which the cause of progress was at that time one. There also Justinian laid the foundations of a legal organization which has stood the test of time. Later the Iconoclast Emperors stayed the conquering march of Mohammedan soldiers in the East at the time when the Christians of the West were saved at Poitiers. The line of Macedonian sovereigns broke the power of the wild eastern hosts in the pay of the powerful Bulgarian kings. Even the Commeni, who had to fight against western and eastern barbarians, owe much to the site. And if the Paleologi fell at last, history has recorded the odds against which they fought and the indifference of Western nations to their fate.

In estimating the future importance of this remarkable site it is necessary to remember that the tide of western civilization is now flowing eastward. Overland traffic between Europe and Asia, that is to say between European centers of industry and the Asiatic markets of consumption situated in the densely populated regions of the eastern continent, is bound to pass through Constantinople because the city lies on the path of shortest distance between the two centers. Even the air line which we must henceforth take into account passes over Constantinople in its shortest stretch between populous India and industrial Europe.

As in the past, the future political status of Constantinople is bound to be affected by such relations. To discuss this theme beyond the geographical problem in this paper is not my purpose. I shall therefore confine myself to pointing to the natural boundaries available in case Constantinople should be turned into a neutral city under international control, as has been suggested on various occasions.

To internationalize the site of Constantinople implies internationalization of the elongated belt of waterways comprising the Bosphorus, Marmora, and Dardanelles. It is of the utmost interest to note that this region is a well-defined unit which, on the European mainland, extends westward so as to include the valley of the Erghene. In Asia its boundary is even better laid off by the valley of the Sakaria river and a long fault line which may be distinguished on a map by a string of lakes. Advantage could be taken of these geographical features for the establishment of a neutral zone with Constantinople as headquarters.

But whatever the fate in store for Constantinople, the fact remains that from the time of Constantine's selection of the city as imperial residence to our day, the history of Constantinople has more than once been a summary of world history. It is safe to predict an equally momentous future for the city as long as the value of its site to the inhabitants of the eastern hemisphere shall remain unimpaired.